



WORK AND LIFE:

TEN WAYS TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR CAREER

Takeaway Points

- Today, it's a must that you manage your own career and figure out where your next job can take you.
- Always have a resume ready and updated with new and notable accomplishments.
- Have a keen sense of which direction your employer is heading and how it might affect your job.
- Build and cultivate a network – in person and online – that can help build relationships and possibly lead you to your next job.

By: Team Pongo

Time was, a company would hire you and move you up the ladder once or twice, earning you the tag of “lifer.” You would toil for the same company from your 20s until you retired with a healthy pension. For sure, times have changed and it's imperative that you manage your own career and figure out where your next job can take you.

So, here are 10 ways to take charge of your career:

- 1) **Always have a resume ready.** Your resume is you, boiled down to one or two pages. Rather than put it away because you're happily employed, always keep it updated with new and notable accomplishments. Why? First, you never know when someone might want to recruit you for something better. Second, you never know when your employer will cut you loose with a layoff.
- 2) **“Sell” yourself,** and don't feel ashamed about it. Many job seekers address their accomplishments on their resumes in objective terms, recalling what they *did* instead of what they *accomplished* that made a difference. “Built a web community that enhanced customer loyalty and increased revenue” is a lot better than saying, “was in charge of building web community of customers.”
- 3) **Numbers don't hurt when you address your accomplishments.** This is even better: “Helped increase revenue 5% and boost customer loyalty 20% by building a web community.” Decision makers are more swayed by numbers. Anytime you can quantify how much of a difference you made in your work, don't hold back. If you don't know the numbers, find out from someone in the organization who can give you that data.
- 4) **Determine where you are and what you want from your current job.** Is your job teaching you new skills that you can build on to help grow your career? Are you learning new processes that can streamline how work gets done? What about new computer applications that help you do things faster or better? Have you picked up a new skill or two that can take your career in a different direction?
- 5) **Determine where you want your career to go in the future.** This is easier to write than it is to put into practice. If, for example, you're 45 years old now, your long-term career goals could well be different from the goals you had set when you were 25. So it's healthy to keep the long-term view in mind no matter how many times you change direction. Aim for jobs that can help you reach your long-term goal.



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Did you know?

The Pongo Blog (www.pongoresume.com/blogs/1/pongo.cfm) offers real-time tips and advice on maintaining a work-life balance in the Work/Life section.

- 6) **Read your employer's "tea leaves."** Be aware of what direction your employer is heading. Is the company flourishing or floundering? How might your organization's direction affect your role? Will that direction enhance or hamper your career growth?
- 7) **Follow the leader.** The average tenure of a CEO has gotten shorter, according to recent surveys. A change at the top could signal a change in company direction, which could affect you and possibly prompt you to polish your resume and look elsewhere for work.
- 8) **Look at job postings – even if you're happy with your job.** If you're taking charge of your career, it doesn't hurt to look at job postings for positions you may want a year or two down the road, or just to read what companies are looking for. If you're missing a key qualification or two, you may want to consider taking action that can fill that gap, such as a special assignment at your current job or a college-level course.
- 9) **Build and cultivate a network.** This can be done face-to-face or over the web. It may feel awkward, but linking up with a group of like-minded people can help build relationships and maybe lead to a job, or even some free feedback and discussion about your resume or career choices. And you can share your expertise for the benefit of others.
- 10) **Pay attention to economic trends.** Today, we're exposed to much more business news than previous generations were. Be aware of macroeconomic trends such as growth, inflation, movements within the stock market, and employment trends and think about how they might affect you, your job, and your company. At the same time, keep abreast of happenings in your industry.

It all boils down to anticipation and preparation. Keeping an eye toward the future, watching for signs of upcoming change, and regularly updating your resume will help keep you on track and in control throughout your career.

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